

H.R. 2095 will take major steps to prevent derailments by improving track safety and grade crossing safety, increasing whistle-blower protections, setting hours of service requirements, and strongly enforcing rail safety violations.

The rail safety section of the bill includes 3 provisions that I offered through amendments in Committee and on the House floor.

The first provision would create strict training standards for all railroad employee inspectors. Railroad inspectors have expressed frustration over their lack of training curriculum. They claim that most training is on the job and from coworkers. This provision creates strong training, testing, and skills evaluation measures to ensure that inspectors are able to address critical safety defects that contribute to derailments and accidents.

The second provision would fund Operation Lifesaver for \$7 million over the next 4 years. Operation Lifesaver is a rail safety awareness program that provides public service announcements, school presentations, brochures and materials, and support for public awareness campaigns. The goal of this public education program is to end collisions, deaths, and injuries at highway-rail grade crossings and on railroad rights-of-way. The program is supported by a wide range of partners including Federal, State and local government agencies, highway safety organizations, law enforcement, and the Nation's railroads. The provision will also create a pilot program for sustained outreach in high risk areas, as defined by number of accidents and population density near the tracks.

The third provision would prohibit the Federal Government from allowing train safety inspections in Mexico from satisfying U.S. safety requirements. Railroad companies have tried multiple times to receive waivers from the Federal Government from having to perform safety inspections of trains that cross the border. Safety inspections in Mexico are much different than those performed on our side of the border and we must make sure U.S. rail safety laws are being followed.

H.R. 2095 also includes a major provision regarding the implementation of Positive Train Control (PTC) systems that is vital to ensuring that accidents such as the recent Metrolink tragedy never happen again. The bill requires all major railroads and passenger railroads to implement PTC by December 31, 2015. PTC systems have the ability to stop trains automatically before accidents occur by using switch position indicators, track integrity technology, GPS systems, and other technology. The bill also includes a grant program to assist the railroads in deploying PTC systems.

I am concerned that an important provision regarding State regulation was not included in this final bill. The State regulation provision would have ensured the original intent of Congress to give States regulatory authority to address local safety hazards.

The provision is necessary because Federal Appellate Courts have preempted every attempt by the States to implement rail safety provisions where the FRA has not acted. This was not the original intent of Congress. The Federal Railroad Safety Act as passed in 1970 says, "The States will retain the authority to regulate individual local problems where necessary to eliminate or reduce essentially local railroad safety hazards."

States and local communities cannot rely on the limited FRA resources to address their

safety concerns. States must be allowed to regulate the railroad in order to protect their property and their citizens. I hope this important safety issue will be addressed in the next Congress.

I also support the Amtrak and passenger rail section of H.R. 2095 which makes a dramatic investment in our passenger rail system that will provide jobs, strengthen the economy, and improve the environment.

The bill creates a new State Grant Program that provides \$380 million per year for intercity passenger rail. This is desperately needed in California as it has 3 of the top 5 busiest rail corridors in the U.S. These corridors include Pacific Surfliner from San Diego through Los Angeles to San Luis Obispo, the Capitol Corridor from San Francisco through Sacramento to Auburn, and the San Joaquin Corridors from Bakersfield to Oakland and Sacramento.

The bill will greatly assist the Sunset Limited, which travels through my district, by alleviating "choke points" with congestion grants and a new process for mediating disputes with freight railroads at the Surface Transportation Board (STB). It also provides funding for a High Speed Rail System which California has been working on.

The passenger rail section includes a provision I authored regarding compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the raising of station platforms. L.A. Metrolink and many other commuter railroads have fully complied with ADA rules by putting ramps and lifts in all of their stations so the disabled community can safely and easily board the trains. DOT has proposed making a rule that would require all railroad stations to fully raise their platforms to the floor level of the trains entering the station. The problem is that most passenger rail stations are serviced by multiple railroad companies with different train sets. Raising the platform could create major vertical and horizontal gaps between the trains and the platform. This would make it harder for the disabled community to safely and efficiently enter and exit trains. The provision I authored requires Amtrak to study how raising station platforms will affect the safe and efficient boarding of trains for all passengers.

Madam Speaker, I strongly support passage of H.R. 2095, this very important railroad safety and passenger rail bill. I thank the Chairman for shepherding this bill through the legislative process.

ELDER ABUSE VICTIMS ACT OF 2008

SPEECH OF

HON. RAHM EMANUEL

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, September 22, 2008

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 5352, the Elder Abuse Victims Act of 2008.

This bipartisan legislation increases prosecutions by providing technical, investigative, coordination, and victim assistance resources to law enforcement to support elder justice cases. Additionally, it also provides grants for training, technical assistance, policy development, multidisciplinary coordination and other types of support to local prosecutors handling elder justice—related cases.

Elder abuse is a silent but widespread problem: reports reveal that 500,000 to 5 million senior Americans will be victims of some form of abuse every year, causing illness, suffering, and premature death. In my home state of Illinois, reports to the Illinois Elder Abuse and Neglect Program increased by 48% between 1997 and 2005.

Few pressing social issues have been as systematically ignored as elder abuse. Over the past 25 years, Congress passed comprehensive bills to address child abuse and crimes against women, yet there is not one full-time Federal employee working on elder abuse in the entire Federal Government.

A comparison of federal money spent to fight abuse and neglect shows that less than 2 percent of federal dollars spent on abuse and neglect goes toward elder abuse. In addition, no federal law has yet been enacted that adequately and comprehensively addresses the issues of elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

Since my election to Congress, I have been working with my colleagues Rep. PETER KING and Senators JOHN BREAUX, ORRIN HATCH and BLANCHE LINCOLN to pass the Elder Justice Act to protect vulnerable seniors. I am glad the bill before us, the Elder Abuse Victims Act includes many of the crucial law enforcement provisions of the Elder Justice Act. This bill is the first step to understanding—and therefore eradicating—elder abuse.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Pennsylvania for including these crucial provisions in his legislation and I urge my colleagues to join me in voting for H.R. 5352, the Elder Abuse Victims Act.

PAUL WELLSTONE AND PETE DOMENICI MENTAL HEALTH PARITY AND ADDICTION EQUITY ACT OF 2008

SPEECH OF

HON. BETTY MCCOLLUM

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 23, 2008

Ms. McCOLLUM of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 6983, the Paul Wellstone Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act. It is long past time that the 54 million Americans suffering from mental illness have access to the care they need, and we cannot afford another day to go by.

This legislation is named in tribute to the late Minnesota Senator Paul Wellstone whose work on this issue was groundbreaking. I also rise to thank my colleague from Minnesota, Congressman JIM RAMSTAD, for his courage in sharing his experience with substance abuse and his hard work on this legislation. Without his dedication and perseverance, we would not be at this critical moment.

We have all been affected in some way—ourselves, a family member, a friend, or colleague—by mental health or substance abuse. This is an issue I hear about in my district a lot and I thank my constituents who have been willing to share their stories to make change.

The current system is unfair and inadequate. People should not have to forego essential treatment because of cost when care could mean improvements to their quality of life and productivity. Parents should not end

up with an emergency room bill they cannot pay because they rushed their child to the hospital after a suicide attempt. Our service men and women returning from Iraq should not be handed a 1-800 number to treat a mental illness.

Passing this bill is both morally and economically right because delay not only affects individuals and families, but it also affects schools, businesses, and our communities. I urge my colleagues to join me in voting for this important bill. Today we can finally make mental health parity a reality.

TRIBUTE TO SUE BOSTON

HON. TOM LATHAM

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 25, 2008

Mr. LATHAM. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Sue Boston of Marshalltown, Iowa as the recipient of the Governor's Volunteer Award for her time spent volunteering in the Marshalltown Community School District.

The Governor's Volunteer Award program was established to honor and recognize volunteers for the commitment, service and time that they contribute to Iowa's government agencies and nonprofit organizations. Sue has volunteered with the Marshalltown Community School District for 20 years, contributing her time and talents to improving the lives of area students and the community as a whole.

I consider it a great honor to represent Sue Boston in the United States Congress, and I wish her the best as she continues to provide a positive impact on young people and her community in the years to come.

CONSOLIDATED SECURITY, DISASTER ASSISTANCE, AND CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2009

SPEECH OF

HON. BOB ETHERIDGE

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 24, 2008

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2638, the Consolidated Security, Disaster Assistance, and Continuing Appropriations Act for 2009. This bill provides vital funding for our national security needs by including regular appropriations for the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Defense, and the Department of Veterans Affairs. It also provides continuing funding for the regular operations of other areas of the Federal Government to prevent any interruption in vital services for our citizens.

As a veteran of the U.S. Army, I am proud that this bill keeps our commitments to our troops and their families, those who are serving in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other areas around the world and those who have served our Nation honorably in this war or previous times of strife.

H.R. 2638 provides \$487.7 billion for our military needs. It addresses equipment shortfalls for our troops, improves training, and ensures that our military men and women, and their families, receive first class medical care.

The bill increases military pay by 3.9 percent, rejects the President's attempts to increase TRICARE fees, and continues our commitment to the well-being of our soldiers. It provides critical support to the people who support our troops, making \$2.8 billion available for family advocacy, education, and daycare. It improves barracks and military hospitals with a \$734 million increase over the President's request, ensuring our soldiers have quality facilities when they serve our Nation.

Like the House-passed Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act, H.R. 6599, this bill makes veterans a top priority. It includes a total of \$47.6 billion for the Department of Veterans Affairs, more than 10 percent over last year's appropriation. \$41 billion supports the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) and Veterans Medical Services, which expects to serve more than 5.8 million patients next year. To improve access to care for our veterans, particularly in rural areas without a VHA facility, the bill provides \$200 million for fee-based providers where VHA services are not available. This bill also helps our soldiers returning today from Iraq and Afghanistan, increasing funding for traumatic brain injury and post traumatic stress disorder treatment, as well as supporting prosthetics and new prosthetic technology.

As the Representative of Fort Bragg, one of the largest United States Army bases in the country, I am pleased that this bill addresses the needs of our military installations. H.R. 2638 includes \$25 billion for military construction. With a commitment of \$8.8 billion, this bill addresses the costs of implementing the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC), which is bringing unprecedented growth to Fort Bragg.

As a Member of the House Committee on Homeland Security, I am pleased that this bill makes investments in our security needs while cutting funding for low priority and poorly managed programs. It also demands long-needed oversight for contracting and procurement to ensure taxpayer funds are well spent. Homeland security begins with hometown security, and this bill provides \$4.2 billion, nearly twice the funding requested by the President, for first responders who provide the first line of defense against disaster, whether natural or man-made. It provides funding for a record number of border patrol agents and other Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers, enhancing our ability to enforce our laws and keep our borders secure. The bill pays for 4,361 new CBP personnel and 1,400 more detention beds for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and adds \$1 billion for ICE's enforcement efforts and \$775 million for border security fencing and technology. Overall it includes nearly \$40 billion in funding to keep Americans secure and ensure that our Nation is prepared for every emergency.

H.R. 2638 provides additional money for Community Development Block Grants, Social Services Block Grants, and disaster relief to address the emerging needs of communities responding to recent natural disasters. It also provides an additional \$2.5 billion over last year for Pell Grants to prevent cuts that were facing college students in the middle of the year.

This is not a perfect bill, and compromises needed to be made in order to ensure our Nation's vital priorities can be addressed. I am disappointed that H.R. 2638 does not include any restrictions on offshore drilling, ending 25

years of Congressional protection for our beaches and shorelines, and allowing oil rigs to be built just three miles from our coast. I am disappointed that this bill does not include a balanced energy strategy, like that in the House-passed H.R. 6899, the Comprehensive American Energy Security and Consumer Protection Act, to give states control over their coastlines and target drilling and exploration in the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) beyond 50 miles of our coastlines. I am disappointed that this bill does not significantly address our desperate need for school construction and modernization, as our schools are bursting at the seams and our economy could use the new jobs it would create. I am disappointed that in this time of financial crisis, this bill does not address state shortfalls for Medicaid and other pressing needs. I look forward to working to address these shortfalls when the 111th Congress takes up appropriations for the rest of FY2009 in the new year.

I support H.R. 2638, the Consolidated Security, Disaster Assistance, and Continuing Appropriations Act for 2009, and I urge my colleagues to join me in voting for its passage.

RECOGNIZING THE HONORABLE BUD CRAMER AND THE HONORABLE TERRY EVERETT ON THEIR RETIREMENT FROM CONGRESS

SPEECH OF

HON. JO BONNER

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 24, 2008

Mr. BONNER. Mr. Speaker, I respectfully request to include the accompanying articles in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD to supplement my remarks which were entered during the Special Order in honor of two Members of the Alabama Delegation who are retiring.

[From The Montgomery Advertiser, August 5, 2008]

CONGRESSMAN GARNERS PRAISE FOR LOCAL SUPPORT

(By Cosby Woodruff)

Congressman Terry Everett's support for Maxwell Air Force Base during his 16 years in Washington is one reason the River Region benefits from the base's \$1.6 billion annual impact, said the head of the Montgomery Area Chamber of Commerce.

Chamber President Randy George said Everett's impact on the area goes far beyond Maxwell, but any discussion of the congressman's legacy must start with the military.

"You can't take that away from him," George said. "He has been a major player on Maxwell."

George said Maxwell is one of Montgomery's biggest economic engines, but the base contributes to the region in ways that can't be measured in dollars and cents.

"The societal impact to our area is at least as important," George said. "It makes us cosmopolitan."

Everett, who is retiring after eight terms in Congress, spoke to the chamber for the last time as a congressman Monday at its Eggs & Issues breakfast series.

His speech focused more on national politics than on local economics, but he did say sectors of Alabama's economy are poised for growth—and he pointed to the space industry as one area that could have an impact in years to come.